THE

Moral and Religious Cabinet.

"To aid the cause of Virtue and Religion."

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ADDRESS TO DEISTS.

THE principles of natural religion are all solid, and founded in the reason and relation of things. The gospel of Christ is equally solid and rational. It takes in, unites, and confirms every principle of nature, and adds a number of circumstances suited to the fallen condition of man. And it calls upon, it invites, it challenges, it commands us to examine its pretensions with all possible care, accuracy, and severity.

"Wrong not the christian; think not reason yours;
Tis reason our great Master holds so dear;
Tis reason's injured rights his wrath resents;
Tis reason's voice obeyed his glories crown.—
On argument alone our faith is built."

If the gospel had not been agreeable to the most refined principles of human reason, we should never have found the soundest and most perfect reasoners, that ever appeared upon earth, enlist under its banner. That it is not universally received, is by no means to be ascribed, either to its want of due evidence, or to its being an irrational scheme; but to causes of a very different nature. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ should shine unto them." This view ought to alarm the fears, and rouse the attention of every man living; but especially of our unbelieving and sceptical countrymen. Rejection of the truths of religion is always in the sacred writings ascribed to a fault in the heart and will, rather than to any defect in the head. "Ye will not come unto me, that ye may have life.—If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God, or whether I speak of my-

self.—The wicked shall do wickedly and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand.—The ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them; but the transgressors shall fall therein." Say not then, that you would believe if you could. Deceive not yourselves by alledging want of evidence. Tell us no longer of the absurdities and contradictions of scripture. The evidence is ample. The absurdities will vanish, the contradictions will cease, when once your minds are brought into an humble, teachable, and religious frame; when the veil is taken from your hearts, and scales have fallen from your eyes. Deny yourselves, therefore. Cease to live in sin. Mortify your lusts and passions. Part with the pride of false philosophy. Live in humility, purity, and virtue. Be good moral men, conscientious worshippers of God, upon your own principles, sober inquirers after truth, praying for divine direction, and it will not be long before you become believers in Jesus Christ. No moral man can, rationally, wish to reject the gospel, because it is all purity and goodness, and the most powerful means, with which the world was ever favoured, of making us virtuous and good.

——————— "In his blest life
I see the path; and in his death the price;
And in his great ascent, the proof supreme
Of immortality."

For, whatever was the cause, it is plain in fact, that human reason, unassisted, failed mankind in its great and proper business of morality; and, therefore, he that shall be at the pains of collecting all the moral rules of the ancient philosophers, and compare them with those contained in the New Testament, will find them to come infinitely short of the morality delivered by our Saviour, and taught by his Apostles. Add to this, that no other religion which was ever in the world, hath made provision for pardoning the sins of mankind, and restoring us to the divine favour, in a way consistent with the perfections and government of the Supreme Being.

You will give these reasonings the weight which you suppose they deserve. If you seriously and conscientiously think there is

nothing in them worthy of your attention, by all means reject them. If any of you are convinced by what is advanced, that you have hitherto been mistaken, in rejecting Jesus Christ and his gospel; or if you see ground to suspect you may be wrong; let no consideration of shame induce you to deny your convictions or suspicions. Many men have been mistaken as well as you. I myself have seen reason to change several opinions, which before I had thought founded in truth. Every person, indeed, must naturally and necessarily at first be a stranger to the gospel-redemption. Our efforts, therefore, should be made to become acquainted with it, and to get into the good and right way. If we look back upon the foregoing pages,* we shall see that several of the characters there mentioned had been much led astray. Through different means, however, they discovered their error. They acknowledged their fault. They lamented their sin. They laid aside their prepossessions, and sought for the truth with all their skill and abilities. They were convinced in their understanding; converted in their hearts; they believed in the Redeemer; obeyed his gospel; and through infinite and unmerited grace, were eternally saved. Why then should not you pursue the same measures, if you have any suspicions every thing is not with you as it should be? You must allow, if the gospel-account of things be true, it is inconceiveably important. Treat it not, therefore, with contempt, neglect, indifference, but examine the matter to the bottom. Follow the example of West and Littleton, and let no man lead you by the nose to destruction, or sneer you out of salvation. Examine the evidence, and, with all simplicity and humility of mind, judge according to that evidence. And if you are finally convinced, that Jesus is the Christ, act nobly, confess his name, like Rochester, to the teeth of his opposers, and strive like him, to undo all the mischief you may have been the occasion of to others.

"But, if we should be so seriously religious, as you seem to think necessary, we shall lose all the comforts of life, and become dull and melancholy."

* *Alluding to page* 209.

If this were true, one hour's enjoyment of the glory of heaven would more than make amends for all your present loss. It is not, however, true. The ways of godliness are grievously belied. For there is no happiness like the happiness of religion, even in the present world; and no peace like that of God, which passeth all understanding.

"The men of grace have found
Glory begun below;
Celestial fruits on earthly ground,
From faith and hope do grow.
The hill of Sion yields
A thousand sacred sweets
Before we reach the heavenly fields,
Or walk the golden streets."—

"But—I shall be singular!"—This is partly true, and partly otherwise. And suppose you are singular; how will this injure you? You will have the approbation of your own mind. You will have God, and Christ, and angels, and all good men your friends. And is not this sufficient, but you must have the approbation of the devil and all his servants too, the children of vice and folly? Mistake not, the approbation of both is incompatible.—*You cannot serve God and Mammon;* neither can you have the friendship of God, Christ, angels, and good men, and at the same time possess the approbation of the devil, and his servants, whose portion is in this life. The thing is impossible. You may as well attempt to reconcile light and darkness, fire and water, heaven and hell.—But suppose you should become a convert of the gospel of Christ, and be truly in earnest about the salvation of your soul, and, of course, singular in your way and manner of life; what inconvenience would you sustain? or what real dishonour would you undergo? Was not Socrates singular among the Athenians? Were not Enoch and Noah singular among the Antediluvians? Was not Abraham singular in Canaan, and Lot in Sodom? Were not Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, and the prophets very singular persons in their day? Our blessed Lord, his holy Apostles, and all the prim-

itive Christians, were they not uniformly the same? And where was the misfortune of all this? When we read the story of these ancient worthies, don't we admire their wisdom, their courage, their choice, and their noble superiority to all those poor creatures who opposed them, and cast out their names as evil?

It is evident, that there are times and circumstances, when if a man will be truly religious, and preserve an unshaken fidelity to his Creator and his Saviour, he must be singular; he must step aside; he must beg to be excused in a variety of cases. He must be singular or lose his soul. Let not the fear of this odious imputation deter any man from exemplary piety. The giddy multitude, and the sons and daughters of pleasure, *falsely so called*, may pretend to sneer and deride; but yet, notwithstanding, they will secretly applaud your virtuous conduct. There is a certain dignity, a real nobility, a secret charm, in a consistently religious character, which none can despise. And sooner or later, the whole human race will be of one opinion concerning it.

Instead of being heroes in wickedness then, or ringleaders in the cause of infidelity, for there are not a few who make a mock at sin, and glory in their shame, let it be your highest ambition to become christian heroes; heroes who can forgive, and love, and bless your enemies; who can conquer the world and all your own degenerate propensities; heroes, whose heads are big only with schemes of mercy and of kindness; whose hands are continually stretched out in prayer and acts of benevolence! and who are never at ease, but in going about doing good to the bodies and souls of men; heroes in whom religion sits, as it were, in triumph, with all the passions in subjection around her; with all the lustre that wisdom, and prudence, and piety, and learning, and good sense, and good breeding, can bestow to make you amiable; heroes in short, whose daily endeavor is to clothe the naked, to feed the hungry, to visit the sick, to instruct the ignorant to be a father to the fatherless, a husband to the widows, and a friend to the friendless of all parties and denominations of men. If such is your heroism,

the ear will bless when it hears you; the eye will give witness when it sees you; the blessing of him that is ready to perish will come upon you; and the widow's heart will dance in your presence for joy. Simple as this account may seem, it is an heroism to which few, comparatively, ever attain, or of which they have any idea. It will require all your fortitude, and the utmost stretch of your best powers. In pursuing such a line of conduct, in conjunction with your temporal occupation, you will be employed usefully and comfortably while you live, and you will be training up for the general assembly, and church of the first-born which are written in heaven," when you die. "Be strong in the Lord, then, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. Fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life."

VANITY OF THE WORLD.

"THERE are few people in the world," says Saurin, "who do not form in their minds agreeable plans of happiness, made up of future flattering prospects, which have no foundation except in their own fancies. This disposition of mind, which is so general among mankind, is also one of the principal causes of their immoderate desire to live. Some have questioned whether any mortal were ever so happy as to choose to live his life over again, on condition of passing through all the events, through which he had gone from his birth to his last hour. Without investigating this problem, I venture to affirm, that mankind would be much less attached to the world, if they did not flatter themselves with the hope of enjoying more pleasure than they had hitherto experienced. A child fancies that as soon as he shall arrive at a certain stature, he shall enjoy more pleasure than he hath enjoyed in his childhood, and this is pardonable in a child. The youth persuades himself that men who are what they call settled in the world, are incomparably more happy than young people can be at his age. While we think ourselves condemned to live single, solitude seems

intolerable; and when we have associated ourselves with others, we regret the happy days we spent in the tranquility of solitude. Thus we go on from fancy to fancy, and from one chimera to another, till death arrives, subverts all our imaginary projects of happiness, and makes us know by our own experience, what the experience of others might have fully taught us long before, that is, that the whole world is vanity, that every state, all ages, and all conditions, have inconveniences peculiar to themselves, and one which is common to them all, I mean a character of disproportion to our hearts, so that by changing our situation, we often do no more than change our kind of infelicity."

1. Nicholas Breakspear, who on his advancement to the popedom, assumed the name of Adrian IV. was, in the early part of his life, reduced to the necessity of submitting to servile offices for bread. He studied in France, where, though he laboured under the pressures of poverty, he made a wonderful progress in learning. One day, on an interview with an intimate friend, he told him, "That all the hardships of his life were nothing in comparison to the Papal Crown;" and speaking of the difficulties and sorrows he had experienced, he observed "That he had been, as it were, strained through the alembic of affliction."

2. It was a pertinent discourse of Cineas, dissuading Pyrrhus, from undertaking a war against the Romans: "Sir," saith he, "when you have conquered them, what will you do next?" "Then Sicily, is near at hand, and easy to master." "And what when you have conquered Sicily?" "Then we will pass over to Afric, and take Carthage, which cannot long withstand us." "When these are conquered, what will be your next attempt? "Then," saith Pyrrhus, "we will fall in upon Greece and Macedon, and recover what we have lost there." "Well, when all are subdued, what fruit do you expect from all your victories?" "Then," said he, "we will sit down and enjoy ourselves." "Sir," replied Cineas, "may we not do it now? Have you not already a kingdom of your own? And he that cannot enjoy himself with a kingdom,

cannot with the whole world. Such are the designs of men, and so we may answer them. Most are projecting how they may get such an estate; then how they may raise themselves to honour, and think that their advancement in both will bring them satisfaction. Alas! this will not do. Their desires will still run before them: And they may as well sit down content where they are, as where they hope to be."

3. Vetellius, an emperor of Rome, was so luxurious, that at one supper he had upon his table two thousand fishes of different kinds, and seven thousand flying fowls. He was drawn through the streets of Rome with an halter about his neck, and was put to death.

4. Dioclesian found a crown so disagreeable, that he cast it off and retired to a private life. And another said from his own bitter experience, that if any man knew what cares and dangers were wrapt in a crown, he would not take it up if he saw it lie in the way before him.

5. Charles V. Emperor of Germany, King of Spain, and lord of the Netherlands, was born at Ghent in the year 1500. He is said to have fought sixty battles, in most of which he was victorious; to have obtained six triumphs, conquered four kingdoms, and to have added eight principalities to his dominions. An almost unparaleiled instance of worldly prosperity and the greatness of human glory. But all these fruits of his ambition, and all the honours that attended him, could not yield him true and solid satisfaction. Reflecting on the evils and miseries which he had occasioned, and convinced of the emptiness of earthly magnificence, he became disgusted with all the splendor that surrounded him, and thought it his duty to withdraw from it, and spend the rest of his days in religious retirement. Accordingly he voluntarily resigned all his dominions to his brother and son; and after taking an affectionate and last farewell of his son, and a numerous retinue of princes and nobility, that respectfully attended him, he repaired to his chosen retreat, which was situated in a vale in Spain, of no

great extent, watered by a small brook, and surrounded with rising grounds covered with lofty trees. A deep sense of his frail condition and great imperfection, appears to have impressed his mind, in this extraordinary resolution, and through the remainder of his life. As soon as he had landed in Spain he fell prostrate on the ground, and considering himself now as dead to the world, he kissed the earth and said,—"Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked I now return to thee, thou common mother of mankind!"

6. Eminence of situation is no proof of superior happiness: hence Pope Adrian VI. had this inscription put on his monument; "Here lies Adrian the Sixth, who was never so unhappy in any period of his life, as in that in which he was a prince."

From the above circumstances we may learn to moderate our desires, and not to depend on any fascinating situation or earthly good, however alluring; not, indeed, that we are to conclude that temporal blessings are to be undervalued, and that terrene enjoyments are to be neglected altogether. "Nothing," says the late Mr. Sowden, "except the grossest stupidity and ingratitude, can render us insensible to temporal prosperity, and to the external means of happiness, when Providence thinks fit to bestow them upon us. When our cup overflows with blessings, and we are surrounded with every thing which can render life not only comfortable but delightful, shall we, because imperfection is the indelible character of every worldly advantage, give way to melancholy and sorrow, or suffer such gloomy discontent to suppress, and render vain every motive to gratitude and joy? Forbid it, reason—forbid it religion." Let us then attend to the golden mean, neither to expect a heaven in this life, nor to make it a hell by our discontent, impatience, and folly. Let us not depend on futurity, nor "overlook present happiness in the idle hope, that some future period of life will afford us more complete satisfaction; thus bartering the enjoyment of actual good for the empty shadow of expectation.

PROVIDENTIAL DELIVERANCE OF A COLLIER,

Who was left in the bottom of a Coal-Pit to be starved to death, by an unnatural Nephew, near Bristal, in Yorkshire.

Joshua ——, the subject of the following Narrative, previous to his conversion, was a man of violent passions, and of so vindictive a disposition, that when he has received an injury from any one, he has meditated revenge for whole nights together. In 1773, it pleased the Almighty to awaken his conscience by the preaching of a stranger who came into that Circuit. Soon after, his soul was set free from the guilt and power of sin, and the peace and forgiving Love of God were shed abroad in his heart. The leopard then changed his spots, and the lion became meek and harmless as a lamb. His fierce and turbulent tempers were subdued, and kept in chains by the power of divine Grace, and his life demonstrated the reality of the work of God in his soul. He continued to walk in the Light of Life, and as that spiritual light increased, he discovered the necessity of being cleansed from the remains of the carnal mind, and from all those tempers and propensities that spring from it. This painful discovery induced him to cry mightily to the Lord for full deliverance, and complete victory over his own evil heart. His prayers were heard, and answered; and from that time he continued to increase in fellowship with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

In 1777, (four years after his conversion,) being a collier, and at that time out of employment, he applied to the Proprietor of a Colliery, where he had a nephew, who was engaged as a kind of overseer. The gentleman immediately hired him, and he went to work; but the nephew was highly displeased at having his religious uncle always at his heels; and entertained the most inveterate hatred against him. Finding it impossible to get rid of his uncle, he formed the horrible resolution to take away his life; and for this purpose watched a proper opportunity. In the colliery was an air-pit, in which there were several vents for the air to be communicated to the adjacent pits. In this air-pit some altera-

tions were necessary in order to procure a free circulation of the air; but as the cold was very severe (it being then a hard frost) the proprietor ordered his overseer, that if he could procure one of the men who would willingly undertake the business, to be very sure not to suffer him to remain in that pit, above two or three hours at a time. The overseer immediately fixed upon his uncle to do this job; and although he was not a man of a strong constitution, yet being afraid that the Gospel would be blamed if he refused, he therefore undertook it. The proprietor ordered his own son (a lad) to attend at the top of the pit, and as soon as the time was expired, to call somebody and draw up the collier. The lad, accordingly, went at the hour appointed, and apprized the overseer of it; who bade him go home, and he would take care to draw up his uncle; instead of doing so, he never came near the pit, but went away, and left his uncle to perish.

The pit was in a private place, unfrequented by passengers; the water and mud where the collier worked, was up to his ankles; the pit's bottom being only three-quarters of a yard high, the poor man was obliged to lie upon one side most of the time. After remaining in this situation about six hours, and no one coming to his assistance, he shouted as loud as he could, for near half an hour, till his strength was exhausted. By this time his limbs were quite stiff, it was very dark, and he knew his nephew's business was to see that all the men were drawn up; he therefore perceived it was a malicious design to destroy him, and had little expectation of deliverance. In this distressing situation, he lifted up his heart to God, and found him a very present help in the time of trouble. The Lord poured upon his soul such an abundance of peace and love, that his dreary prison was turned into a paradise. "I felt in my soul," (to use his own language) "such a holy triumph over Death, as I can never express; for the Lord poured upon me rivers of consolation; and the promises came so thick about me, that if I had had the Bible before me, I could not have read them so fast. I would not have been without this trial for all the world. But what gave me the greatest satisfaction was the won-

derful love I felt in my heart towards my nephew, though I knew his intention was to murder me. And although I had great pain in my body, as well as sympathy with an affectionate wife and children at home, yet not one unloving thought did I feel against my persecutor; but could praise God for the accomplishment of that word, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

The master of the colliery felt strange uneasiness in his mind about the poor man, and said to the overseer, "Did you draw your uncle out of the pit?" He answered, Yes." "But did you bring away the instruments from the pit's mouth; for as it is Saturday night, they may be stolen." Upon the nephew's acknowledging that he had forgot them, the master ordered him to go and fetch them away, and he went accordingly. When he came near the place, the uncle heard the sound of his feet, and crawling to the pit's eye, shouted as loud as he possibly could, but the nephew returned no answer, and went home with the instruments. Joshua was fully persuaded that his nephew heard him. After the master was in bed, he was still much troubled; not that he had the least suspicion of any bad design, but was afraid lest the nephew had trusted to some other persons; and therefore he sent his son again to the nephew, saying, "Did you yourself draw up your uncle? for my father cannot sleep about him." The nephew replied, "I cannot say I did myself, but my wife and another man drew him up at the time, and he went such a way."

The collier having been now ten hours in the pit, and no relief appearing, he thought he would crawl a little further under, and endeavour to find a spot where he might lie down and die; for the frost was beginning to break, and the pit's mouth kept continually falling in; although when he stood for an hour together in the pit's eye, not one stone fell; which circumstance filled him with wonder and praise. But he was more astonished, when upon proceeding further, where it was totally dark, to find himself suddenly surrounded with a kind of twilight, so that he could see his hands, and the stones about him.

About nine o'clock, his wife began to be very uneasy, but hoping her husband was gone to a prayer-meeting near Birstal, she waited patiently for his return; although she wondered that he did not call at home and sup first, as was his usual custom. At eleven o'clock, she knew not what to do, or where to go. The neighbours endeavoured to persuade her, that her husband was at some meeting farther off, and that it had continued long. By twelve she was almost distracted, and cried out, "It does not signify: my husband knows what I feel; and if he is above ground, he would be no where but at home." The neighbours asked, "What can we do for you? She replied, "Go with me to the pit." Accordingly they went with her. When they came near the place, Joshua heard their feet; with great difficulty he crept to the pit's eye, and cried out as loud as he was able. Upon which they let down a rope; and the poor man entreated the Lord, that as he had so far wonderfully kept him alive, he would be pleased to give him strength to get upon the rope: this he was enabled to do, and they drew him up safe. When he got to the top, his strength was entirely exhausted, and he dropt down on the ground like a stone. This happened about two o'clock in the morning, and he had been in the pit for fifteen hours. Being taken home, he recovered in a short time; and soon after talked with his unnatural nephew upon the transaction. During the conversation between them he found his heart filled with love to his enemy, and his lips with praise to the God of his salvation.

GOD'S CARE OF THE POOR AND DESTITUTE.

ON the border of Derbyshire, at Lightbirch, near Whaley-bridge, lived Anne Longstone, a poor, but industrious and pious woman. She was one of the first Methodists in that neighbourhood. The means by which she got her bread were laborious, and so inadequate to her general necessities, that she was frequently called to exemplify the literal import of the well-known petition in the Lord's prayer, and to ask and trust day by day for

her daily bread. This was her request: God inspired it; and gave her his promise, that "her bread should be given, and her water should be sure." This she proved in various instances. She served the God of her mercies until she attained the full measure of her days, threescore years and ten: nor then did the promise of her heavenly Father fail. She hoped in his word, and proved his Providential care to the end of her pilgrimage, which was as singular as it was glorious. The calls of hunger pressing her to prepare herself a little food, she examined her stock of provisions, and found that when brought together it amounted only to a few potatoes. This scanty supply appears, however, to have been quite equal to her present desires. Sitting down to prepare her little food as in the presence of her God, and on the borders of heaven, she observed to her neighbour, "This is all the food I have got; but my heavenly Father, who sent me this, can send me more when I want it;" and added, "I am not well, but thanks be to the Friend of sinners, I can still sing his praises." Then, as if conscious that the hour of her departure was at hand, she began to sing those memorable lines.

"Soon shall I pass the vale of death,
And in his arms shall lose my breath!
O! then my happy soul shall tell,
My Jesus hath done all things well!"

Having offered this, her last tribute of praise while on earth, to God, her Redeemer, she sunk down, closed her eyes, and expired.

This venerable woman had God's grace in her heart, his promise in her bible—a circle of christian friends who knew her worth—and a small supply for her wants, which, if not amounting to thousands of gold and silver, was quite sufficient to excite the confidence of God's children in a state of poverty. She had enough, and a few potatoes to spare. Say, ye who thirst after the treasures of the earth, and ye, who already possess and set

your hearts upon them ; say, will you, can you vie with this poor woman when you advance towards the confines of the grave, and the margin of an awful eternity ?

THE CHRISTIAN HUSBAND.

CHRISTIANITY draws men of truth together. The christian husband is the true one, a tender and faithful husband, who thinks himself more the defence, than master of a virtuous wife. Deaf to the prejudices of the age, he does his duty. Religion, honour, and truth, are the only sentiments of his heart. He knows that the fair sex, that precious half of the human kind, deserves the regard, the complaisance, and all the attention, which cannot be refused them, without being brutal. Conquered by this obligation, where it is possible to contribute to the happiness of her to whom he is attached for life, he pays homage to her charms, and supports her defects patiently ; for no one is exempt from them, and all of us want indulgence. He equally partakes of her pleasures and pains. He comforts her in her infirmities. He shows her an example of duty, and goes before her in sentiments of virtue. He loves her like himself, and centres his happiness in his wife. If I was a woman I would have a christian husband.

COMPLETE VIRTUE.

CONTENT not thyself that thou art virtuous in the general : for one link being wanting, the chain is defective.

Perhaps thou art rather innocent than virtuous, and owest more to thy constitution than to thy religion.

To be innocent is to be not guilty : but to be virtuous is to overcome our evil inclinations.

If thou hast not conquered thyself in that which is thy own particular weakness, thou hast no title to virtue, though thou art free of other men's.

Poetry.

MORNING SOLILOQUY.

SOFT slumbers now mine eyes forsake,
My powers are all renew'd:
May my freed spirit too awake,
With heavenly strength endu'd!

Thou silent murderer Sloth, no more
My mind imprison'd keep;
Nor let me waste another hour
With thee, thou felon Sleep!

Think, O my soul, could dying men
One lavish'd hour retrieve,
Tho' spent in tears, and pass'd in pain,
What treasures would they give!

But seas of pearl, and mines of gold,
Were offer'd then in vain:
Their pearl of countless price is lost,
And where's the promis'd gain?

Lord, when thy day of dread account
For squander'd hours shall come,
Oh let not this increase th' amount,
And swell the former sum.

Teach me in health each good to prize,
I, dying shall esteem;
And every pleasure to despise
I then shall worthless deem.

For all thy wond'rous mercies past
My grateful voice I raise,
While thus I quit the bed of rest,
Creation's Lord to praise.